

Park Says He's Sorry For Any 'Mistakes,' Denies Impropriety

From News Services

South Korean businessman Tong-sun Park today testified in public for the first time before a congressional committee trying to determine if his admitted payments of \$750,000 to congressmen were legitimate gifts or bribes.

In his opening remarks, the millionaire rice dealer told the House ethics committee he was sorry for "certain things that I did" to promote "the national interests of Korea and the United States."

But he denied he had acted improperly.

Park's appearance came a year and a half after he left Washington in the midst of allegations that the government in Seoul was trying to buy congressmen to maintain a favorable U.S. policy toward South Korea.

PARK, WHO HAS ALREADY testified in private to Justice Department investigators and the House and Senate ethics committees, returned for questions today from the House panel's chief counsel, Leon Jaworski, the former Watergate special prosecutor.

Park said he was "embarrassed" by the notoriety that had engulfed him.

"I'm sure I made some mistakes," Park said in discussing his past Washington activities. "I have no problem in admitting that."

Park, 43, said he was only a young man when he came to Washington, adding, "In retrospect, I wish I had not done certain things that I did."

He resented being called "a swindler," Park said, and stressed he had done nothing improper.

"I want to tell you what I have done . . . constitutes an American success story on a small scale," he told the committee.

THE EVENT WAS STAGED in the same room where the House Judiciary Committee conducted its tele-

vised hearing on the possible impeachment of President Richard Nixon almost four years ago.

Park, wearing a light blue suit and print tie, was accompanied by his lawyer, William Hundley, and several security guards as he entered the crowded hearing room.

The committee is attempting to see if any congressman "accepted anything of value directly or indirectly" from Korean officials or their intermediaries.

To Jaworski, getting Park to respond in public was "almost like a dream come true." The white-haired Texas lawyer made it clear he will ask Park to identify those who accepted payments from him.

But there was every expectation that when Park completes three days of testimony, not much new will have been learned.

MOST OF WHAT Park is expected to tell the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct — the ethics committee — will be confirmation of what has already been leaked or otherwise reported in the press.

Park, given immunity from prosecution for his cooperation with Congress, has admitted giving congressmen \$750,000 in "contributions" in the early 1970s, but never publicly said who got the money.

Jaworski said Park is "going to be required . . . to state specifically what contributions he made" to congressmen in his years as a wealthy Washington socialite.

In a telephone interview from his office in Houston, Jaworski said Park's testimony this week about both current and former House members will "include names with financial figures attached."

"He will also be examined closely about whether there are any additional ones (contributions)," the prosecutor said. "He may be confronted with some things he wasn't confronted with at the time of the executive session."

Sources close to the committee's investigation, including committee members, have said that barring any major new evidence they believe no more than a half dozen incumbents House rules violations.

Since the 43-year-old businessman consented to an agreement granting him immunity from prosecution on a 36-count indictment earlier this year, he has told his story again and again for investigators from the Justice Department and the House and Senate committees, first in Seoul and then in Washington but always in secret.

JAWORSKI SHRUGGED off the long wait for public hearings, recalling that last autumn Park was in Seoul and completely out of reach of investigators.

"To find that he's here now and that he's going to be exposed to the American people . . . which they deserve . . . it's almost like a dream come true," he said.

Meanwhile, in another development, a former U.S. ambassador to South Korea, William J. Porter, confirmed that an American intelligence agency placed an electronic listening device in the executive mansion of President Park Chung Hee in Seoul.

Porter's statements, given in an interview to be broadcast tonight by CBS News, provide the first authoritative confirmation of earlier reports of electronic eavesdropping in the Blue House, Korea's presidential residence.

The U.S. government has never admitted to having placed the eavesdropping device there. Official spokesmen have declined to confirm or deny the earlier reports.

SOUTH KOREAN OFFICIALS have said that they were assured by State Department officials that the United States had never bugged the Blue House. But the State Department has refused to confirm that such assurances had been given.

Porter, who is retired now, was asked in the interview about reports that American intelligence agents had placed the listening device in the Blue House. He replied: "I was told it had stopped before my arrival."

Porter, who was ambassador in Seoul from 1967 to 1971, was asked again about the device and replied: "I was told that it was not functioning." He added: "I gave a specific order that it was not to be renewed."

Asked why, Porter said: "Because I didn't feel that the risks warranted what we would get."

Porter, whose remarks are to be part of a program called "Anatomy of a Scandal," could not be reached at his home in Westport, Mass., for elaboration. But his account added new information to what has been reported earlier.

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